

CHAPTER 43 – DON'T CALL HIM “BONE DADDY”

Quest Complete: Bone Daddy

Destroy every evil skeleton to awaken the Bone Knight.

Objectives complete:

Slain Skeletons: 21/21

Reward:

Awaken the Bone Knight.

Right on the tail end of that completed quest, another one appeared. This one to quell the [Bone Knight]. Such a task could be achieved in multiple ways, not necessarily just through destruction.

“I don't suppose you're friendly?” Shrubley asked the undead knight rising from its grave with tentative hope.

In an attempt to make a good impression, the plant monster gave a jaunty wave with a twiggy hand.

Even his glowbug familiar pitched in. It made a sort of cute squeaky sound in greeting. At least, Shrubley liked to think that's what his familiar was trying to do.

The creature looked at him, decked out in old and dusty but fully functional armor. He—or she, Shrubley didn't want to assume—looked like an emaciated knight from a fairy tale.

In answer to his question, a blurring strike split the ground where Shrubley had been standing a moment ago. He rolled out of the way just in the nick of time.

The [Bone Knight] wasn't huge, but it still towered over Shrubley. Almost anybody towered over Shrubley. A dwarf would have been able to look down his nose at him without having to bend his back at a 90-degree angle like they would with other races.

Shrubley frowned, one of the first he had ever made. If he could just get the undead knight to talk, he might be able to understand it, considering his racial ability granted him the capacity to do just that.

[Awakened Intellect]: With your awareness awakened from the Archdruid, you instinctively pick up any language spoken or written, monsterfolk or humanfolk.

But this undead didn't seem to be the talking sort. Though, maybe if he kept at it.

"I'd really like to talk," Shrubley said again from somewhere around the thing's ankle.

In response, it swept the sword back around in a circular arc, but Shrubley was nimble and expected the attack. After all, the creature didn't seem inclined to talk and if Shrubley couldn't understand it, then it wasn't making an attempt to communicate.

"You're a knight! That has to count for something," Shrubley said, growing increasingly persistent.

The [Bone Knight] snarled and twisted about on the balls of its bony feet, delivering a smashing overhand attack which Shrubley tried to meet with his own sword.

His wooden [Practice Sword], which had served him so well, was nothing compared to the ancient steel ensorcelled blade of the [Bone Knight]. It cleaved through the sword and into Shrubley's arm with barely a tug of resistance.

Shrubley cried out in agony as both sword and arm fell to the ground.

Grimacing, and truly mad for the first time that he could remember in his short life, he scrambled up the creature's arm as the sword continued its descent into the ground, where it wedged fast.

"How could you be so cruel!" Shrubley demanded. "All I wanted to do was talk. We could have been friends! Is that so wrong? Why does everything here

want to hurt me? I went through a lot of trouble to wake you up, and you hurt me. This place... it's nothing but terrible!"

The [Bone Knight] braced one foot against the side of the stuck blade and tugged with all its might, hardly noticing Shrubley crawling all over it.

"Just go back to sleep!" he yelled into the thing's helmet as Shrubley reached a twiggy arm into the visor and used [Recovery] on the [Bone Knight's] skull.

That got a response, though it still wasn't the one Shrubley had wanted. He didn't feel *good* about hurting it, even if it had sheared off his arm, which smarted quite a bit!

He had liked that arm.

The [Bone Knight] roared with rage and flailed about, smacking Shrubley with thick and heavily armored hands. The shrub tried to roll and bounce away, but without the sword to weigh it down, the [Bone Knight] was suddenly a lot faster.

Shrubley managed to get up onto its head and wrench the helmet off in time to get smacked across the graveyard arena. He fetched up hard against a stone sarcophagus. Green sap leaked out from several wounds.

When Shrubley looked up, he saw that the [Bone Knight] only had one necromantic blue fire in its eye sockets. *I must have extinguished the other with [Recovery]*, he thought to himself.

The [Bone Knight], now blind in one eye, was looking for the small creature. Shrubley rolled to the side, pressing his back against the cool stone of the sarcophagus.

He had just enough mana to use [Recovery] exactly *once* more. That meant he could either deal with the wounds he had, or try to take out the knight, but he couldn't do both.

Unfortunately, the Light orb that hung above Shrubley's head made him an easy mark for the knight. And unlike the other undead, this one seemed to see just fine.

Shrubley's familiar swooped in, heedless of the danger to itself. It buzzed angrily around the [Bone Knight], trying to distract the undead monster. It didn't seem to have any direct attacks of its own. Just that one spell, [Emerald Weapon], that it couldn't cast any longer.

Because Shrubley didn't have a sword anymore. And even if he did, he wasn't sure how much mana the [Elder Glowbug] had left.

The only weapon he could get would be to somehow take it from the [Bone Knight] or from completing the quest, which basically amounted to the same thing. The [Bone Knight] made it clear it didn't wish to talk.

There was no telling how long the [Elder Glowbug] could keep the knight distracted, so Shrubley did what he did best. He tucked himself into a tumbleweed-sized ball and *rolled* for all he was worth.

He picked up speed fast. Yet another thing he was starting to get better at. His branches adjusted this way and that to keep the momentum building.

He came skidding around the sarcophagi as the [Bone Knight] was swatting at the pesky bug flitting around its face.

Shrubley's familiar kept going into its empty eye socket buzzing and filling its head with sound. It was no wonder that it didn't hear Shrubley's war cry as he picked up speed, hit the shattered coffin lid and used it to launch himself toward the knight like it was a stunt ramp.

By the time the knight noticed Shrubley, it was already too late. He attached himself to the [Bone Knight's] skull like a green afro and reached one of his roots down into the other eye.

Necromantic fire burned his roots, but Shrubley was beyond caring. He had suffered worse pain. This was nothing.

He would not see his familiar harmed!

The moment he used [Recovery], the jerking, flailing creature immediately went limp and fell to pieces as if it had never been living to begin with.

Shrubley's fall was broken by the knight's skull shattering on the stony ground. For a moment, he swore he saw *something* moving through the dust and debris of the breaking bones and heard a faint, "thank you" on the wind.

You defeat the [Bone Knight].

Quest Complete: Bone Off

Subdue the Bone Knight.

Objectives complete:

Bone Knight: 1/1

Reward:

[Morph Shield]

[Death's Razor]

[Hunger Essence]

Shrublely sat where he ended up, watching the lone reward drop in front of him. In the case of the shield and razor, they were already there on the [Bone Knight]. He just needed to claim them.

Picking up the [Hunger Essence], Shrublely turned it around with his one hand. It was a beautiful deep orange, like the setting sun back in the mountains that were Shrublely's home.

[Hunger Essence]

(Orange Essence)

(Copper Rank) (★★★ Rare)

A rough orange jewel with a faint inner glow.

Imprint: Upon use, grants the user the [Hunger Essence], provided they have free essence slots.

You have 0 out of 3 essence slots remaining. You do not meet the requirements to bind this to an essence slot.

“Thought so,” Shrublely said to himself. “Oh, hello, friend,” this was to the glowbug that landed on his head. “You were very brave, thank you.”

The glowbug made that squeak again, then bounced its rear back and forth as if it were dancing in celebration.

Shrublely had to admit, he did feel rather pleased about his victory. He felt good about putting that knight to rest after that faint “thank you” he heard.

Shrubley tucked the [Hunger Essence] away into his inventory. *I know just who could use you*, he thought with a sense of hope of seeing his friends again.

He got to his feet and lumbered unsteadily over to the [Bone Knight's] body. Whatever had been controlling the creature was gone, and he hoped they had moved onto a better life than the one they had been trapped in.

The knight's armor was glowing, and so was its sword. Shrubley had always wanted to look like a dashing knight. What kid wouldn't when reared on stories of Paladins and great Knights who protected the realm? So he went to the armor first, expecting to finally get some proper defenses.

Instead, as soon as he touched the breastplate, it shrank and clanked about until it formed a spherical ball of layered steel and then shrank further, until it was a shield the perfect size for Shrubley.

"Wow," Shrubley whispered, surprised by his find. "Now this is a cool shield." His little familiar seemed to agree, or just really enjoyed dancing.

[Morph Shield]

(Shield, Magic Focus)

(Copper Rank) (★☆☆ Uncommon)

Once the property of the [Bone Knight], now yours by rite of combat. It contains a peculiar enchantment that allows it to morph shape.

Imprint: Increases physical defense and magical defense. Serves as a focus for spellcasting, enhancing magic potency and essence powers that are applied to this shield.

Imprint: Morphs shape based on the wielder's desires. Gives a miniscule boost to the Willpower and Restoration attributes when using this item.

The [Bone Knight's] sword was still stuck in the ground next to Shrubley's arm and the shattered remains of his wooden [Practice Sword]. He sighed. It was sad to see it in such a state, but there was nothing he could do for it.

Instead, a strange tingling sensation filled the stump where his arm had been. He set the [Morph Shield] into his inventory and reached down with his one good arm to the exposed crystalline core of the blade.

The tingling intensified and, quite without knowing what he was doing, Shrubley plucked the gem and the fragments of the sword, joining them with his severed arm.

The fragments seemed to orbit one another above his hand. He wasn't sure if he was doing it or they were, but in the end, it didn't matter.

The pieces were wreathed in an emerald light. Shrubley felt an impulse to stick his stump inside the glow. A sense of peace washed over him as he watched the green light solidify into a new arm studded with tiny fragments of crystal from the core of the [Practice Sword].

He flexed the arm curiously, shocked at what he had done. A shard the size and shape of a dagger shot out of his wooden palm and he felt that he could keep extending it if he desired to form a weapon of his very own making.

You gain the essence ability, [Graft].

[Graft (Nature)]

Cost: Extreme Mana, Health, or Stamina

Cooldown: 24 hours

Necessity is the mother of invention.

Imprint: When you acquire appropriate materials, you can graft them onto your body, permanently improving your form and granting unique monster evolutions as well as permanent attributes and abilities or spells.

Shrubley looked at his new arm. *Neat.*